

TEACHING VOCABULARY THROUGH POETRY IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Literature has become an invaluable subject which has added a great value and contribution to the teaching of English language and the discovery of many other developed ideas. Literature produces an exhilarating impulse that imprints a lasting picture on the mind of a learner. Many researchers have devised many means and approaches to teach languages, but it has remained unconvincing because it has only produced little results. Making use of a method that eliminates monotony and boring moment in learners is a good factor that enhances students' motivation for learning. In this sense, literature and language become unavoidable components that aid an intellectual development. This study examines the indispensability of literature as a means of teaching EFL in the classrooms. The researcher has developed many instructive activities which are believed will help EFL students to improve their English grammar. The results make it clear that literature allows learners to give more attention and develop more interest for study. In giving a perspicacious linguistic development, literature therefore remains an essential tool for teaching language in the classrooms.

Keywords: Teaching vocabulary, poetry, EFL classroom.

Introduction

Literature has been an invaluable discipline which through all other disciplines (including scientific discovery) are taught and evaluated. Without literature the art of literacy will definitely become impossible. Whatever that should be learnt, which has to be one way or the other penned will have the trait of literature in it. But without any digressive propensity, this study tends to examine and demythologize the peculiarity and efficacy of using literary text, such as novel, poetry and drama as a medium of teaching EFL in the classroom. Because of its various nature, literature gives many linguistic privileges to the learners of language and makes the tutor create an absorbing functions that are established on the resources that have the strength to motivate the enthusiastic participation (Carter & Long, 1991:3). Poetry becomes an interesting literary genre that evokes emotions from the readers and gives a sense of ecstasy and creativity. And this enhances good response from the reader which will give him motivation for subsequent reading (Collie & Slater, 1987: 226). The imperativeness of poetry in language teaching class is that it is distinctively different from other literary work of art; it breaks some grammatical rules in language usage (Ramsaran, 1983: 36)

In this sense, it is very pervasive to consider that the use of literary text as a medium of teaching EFL which gives students a sense of relaxed atmosphere to that which they are supposed to study, at the same time gives them the intelligibility of what they learn. Collie and Slater state that "engaging imaginatively with literature enables learners to shift the focus of their attention beyond the more mechanical aspects of the foreign languages system" (Collie & Slater 1997) Literature, as it is, reflects different milieu of life, it is a mirror that crystallizes the inner part of human condition and the mystery of life itself. Taking a considerable eyes into the purpose and effects of literature in the society and in the global community; even right from the Greek classical period, when there are so many sophists and philosophers, literature has been a great knowledge phenomenon that has shaped the society and the universe as a whole. There have been different authors who defined literary works as something that has peculiarly reflected different perspectives of life and mirrors the society of men. It has also accentuate different cultural phenomenon of the universe (Basnet & Mounfold, 1993). But some linguists postulate that there is no any statics method to literary approach but only dependent on the view and the interpretation of the reader (Eagleton, 1983).

In this case, the likes of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, have vehemently contributed to the development of human learning through their literary apotheosis. Though, Socrates, regarded as the greatest philosopher of his time never wrote any of his great lessons and orations but it is in form of literature of oral tradition. Notwithstanding, his disciple, Plato became his mouthpiece who put his great thought in writing. Considering all these factors, one will realize that literature gives man a sense of condensability when he is washed in the fluidity of literary ocean. The reading of literary text in the EFL class accelerates the emotional intelligence (Ghosn, 2002). When literature is used in the classroom; it exposes students to critical thinking (Gajduset & Van Dommelen, 1993, Ghosn, 2002, Van, 2009). Ghosn highlights that literature can be used as a tool to bring a considerable changes and development in learner's idiosyncrasy (Ghosn, 2002). Langer postulates that literature gives students an opportunity to reflect on their studies, language and lives. (Langer, 1997). Critical thinking as developed through literary text, allows one to look at things in an objective and rational perspective without the interference of sentimental tendency. Making use of literature therefore infuses in learners the ability to think, interpret, and view things critically. Several articles and studies have explored literature as a tool for language teaching; the part that literature takes is of a great value in language and grammatical improvement. Though several attempts have been made to use poetry to teach language. (Kramsch, 1985; Maley & Duff, 1989; Chatton, 1993; Cullinan, Scala, & Schroder, 1995; Hanauer, 2001; Harlan Kellem, 2009). Poetry becomes effective because it has the pattern that does tend to bore the students. In this case, students attention are drawn to the technique at which poetry is written and the unusual pattern of its language

Therefore, when we consider the indispensability of literary study and its usage in language teaching its adaptability becomes extremely absorbing. In this regards, poetry will be used to a great extent to analyze and demystify language learning. While teaching the students in the classroom it is an essential thing to choose the themes that the students will recognize (McKay, 1986:194). Reading of the poems allows students to develop themselves intellectually and illuminate the logic of the language in the poem, and it allows them to think deeply while being submerged in the struggle for proper interpretation on the basis of their personal experience. They can therefore imagine mythical figures and fantastic creature on the basis of their personal experience. And this occurs when the students engage in an exotic exercise of the mental order. (Traversi, 1976:14) When literary text is used in the classroom as a medium of teaching, it creates an interesting environment for the students. Before the progression of this study, it is essential that the teachers should understand that this method should not be monopolized by the them but it should involve the students. The text that will be treated in the class could be given to the students before the class probably five days before class. The teacher should advise the students to go home and read them. This will give room for proper understanding and the interest to participate in the class. In this case, students should be given an independence to interpret and analyze the text in their own perspectives through the power of their imaginations. However Northrop Frye states that:

...you may ask what is the use of studying the world of imagination where anything is possible and anything can be assumed, where there are no rights or wrongs and all arguments are equally good. One of the most obvious uses, I think is its encouragements of tolerance (Northrop Frye, 1964:77)

Therefore, it is crucial to identify the importance of pre-reading, while reading and post-reading of the text. The pre-reading makes the students familiarize themselves with the text before the class.

WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF LITERATURE IN LANGUAGE EFL CLASS?

- (1.) It allows students to realize that literature solves language problem.
- (2.) It familiarizes students with new words while reading the text
- (3.) It encourages interactive section in the class and even enhances students' understanding of she subject.

- (4.) It eliminates timidity in students while learning in the class
- (5.) It develops their use of vocabularies
- (6.) It allows students to share their feelings and opinions about the text
- (7.) It helps the students to understand the importance of using language for effective communication
- (8.) It motivates students' interest for learning; it makes them find the class absorbing
- (9.) It enhances reading and writing culture in students
- (10.) It also exposes the students to how the figures of speech should be used in communication

Literature becomes essential in a language class, because it has multidimensional purposes and effects on the students. When students become aware of the way language should be used and the way it should not be used, this develops their speaking and writing skill. Tim Bowen and Jonathan Marks highlight in the book entitled *Inside Teaching* some crucial part while teaching with literature in the class that teachers should:

*Hold brief classroom discussions on what learners have been reading (progress report)

*Ask learners to describe a book they like in such a way that will make others students develop interest for reading it.

*Select a short novel which has been recently made into film or TV series with which your learners are familiar

However, literature enhances the compressible nature of a literary work. It allows literary efficiency and creates some relationship between the reader and the writer (McKay 1986:192). When the literature gives a sense of motivation the interaction between the reader and the author is strengthened (Brufit and Carter, 1986:14). Reading the literary text gives the students an independence to write out those interesting things that only dwell in the realm of imagination (Cassaany, 1999). Literary text is not used to teach language alone but it exposes learners to some other important things of the world which they ought to learn; entertains and also educates. The entertaining education in literature is very crucial in learning. This is a stimulant that boosts the students' interest for study. Widdowson explains that:

To present someone with a set of extracts and to require him to read them not in order to learn something interesting and relevant about the world but in order to learn something about the language being used is to misrepresent language use to some degree (Widdowson, 1978:80)

In the process of learning, students develop the reality of their intellectual acumen not only on the subject of language learning, but it enables them to think logically and reason rationally. The hue of literature is therefore brought to an understanding level of interpreting life in comparison with the systematic ethics of the society. Literature usage in the class examines and challenges the intellectual capacity of the students and gives them opportunity to explore ideas that dwell in their mental of illuminating order.

Having understood this crucial order, the teacher becomes an intermediary between the students and their world of imaginative impulse, knowing the fact that literature deals with critical thinking. For the purpose of practical development and evaluation of this study, the writer will make use of the poem he wrote in analyzing language in a pedagogic manner. The poem titled *On the Island of Patmos* will be given a critical concentration in teaching language. The teaching is analyzed below:

PRE-ACTIVITY

Take note of the following questions

- (1.) What type of feeling do you have when you are alone?
- (2.) Do you have information on where the island of Patmos is located?
- (3.) How would you feel if you are banished into an Island where you are kept out of the society of men?
- (4.) Close your eyes and try to imagine that you are in an Island that is full of fear and trembling. If someone touches you from the back at that state of fear and trembling, how much shock and despair will you feel?
- (5.) Have you ever felt lonely even while in the crowd?

ON THE ISLAND OF PATMOS

Walking through the gazing path of the gloomy Island
Subjugated in fear, hearing the thunderous voice of silence
A sound of silence streaming through my ear, with fear of loneliness.
On the island of Patmos I see the unseen.

Snowing sand of the island. I pause, a little step forward
A little phobia, a little courage and little mixture of fear and hope.
Hope and fear co-habiting the mind. The fluidity of
Thought is restricted, and then I looked forward, gazed a little.

Looking into the future I never hoped to see. Then at my back I felt
A little tap of hand. "Never mind, I am not here to hurt you
What you seek to know is right in your presence" I lower my eyes, turned
To behold the unseen, all I saw was that I saw nothing.

But I feel this terrifying presence. Then came a literal still voice
The clumsiness of the picture was removed.
But this fear I must stop, this monster I should disregard.
On this island I live but never cease to breathe.

What should I do? Why am I here on this Island of Patmos
That seems to lead nowhere. Nowhere?
No. I think there is a mix up, there is a Misconceived Feeling.
On the Island, there is hope even when hope is lost.

1-There are 20 lines in the poem. The lines are given in jumbled order. By following the pictures put them into correct order.

Subjugated in fear, hearing the thunderous voice of silence
A sound of silence streaming through my ear, with fear of loneliness.
On the island of Patmos I see the unseen.
Walking through the gazing path of the gloomy Island

Thought is restricted, and then I looked forward, gazed a little.
A little phobia, a little courage and little mixture of fear and hope.
Hope and fear co-habiting the mind. The fluidity of
Snowing sand of the island. I pause, a little step forward.

But I feel this terrifying presence. Then came a literal still voice
 But this fear I must stop, this monster I should disregard.
 The clumsiness of the picture was removed.
 On this island I live but never cease to breathe.

Nostalgia seemed to pine down the strength of my self-encouragement
 Misconceived feeling. On the Island, there is hope even when hope is lost.
 Nowhere? No. I think there is a mix- up, there is a Misconceived
 What should I do? Why am I here on this Island of Patmos that seems to lead nowhere?

A little tap of hand."Never mind" he said, I am not here to hurt you
 It again to behold the unseen, all I saw was that I saw nothing.
 It again to behold the unseen, all I saw was that I saw nothing.
 What you seek to know is right in your presence. I lower my eyes, turn it

1-Walking through the gazing path of the gloomy Island

2-

3-

4-

5- Snowing sand of the island. I pause, a little step forward

6-

7-

8-

9- Looking into the future I never hoped to. Then at my back I felt

10-

11-

12-

13-

14- Misconceived feeling. On the Island, there is hope even when hope is lost

15-

16-

17-

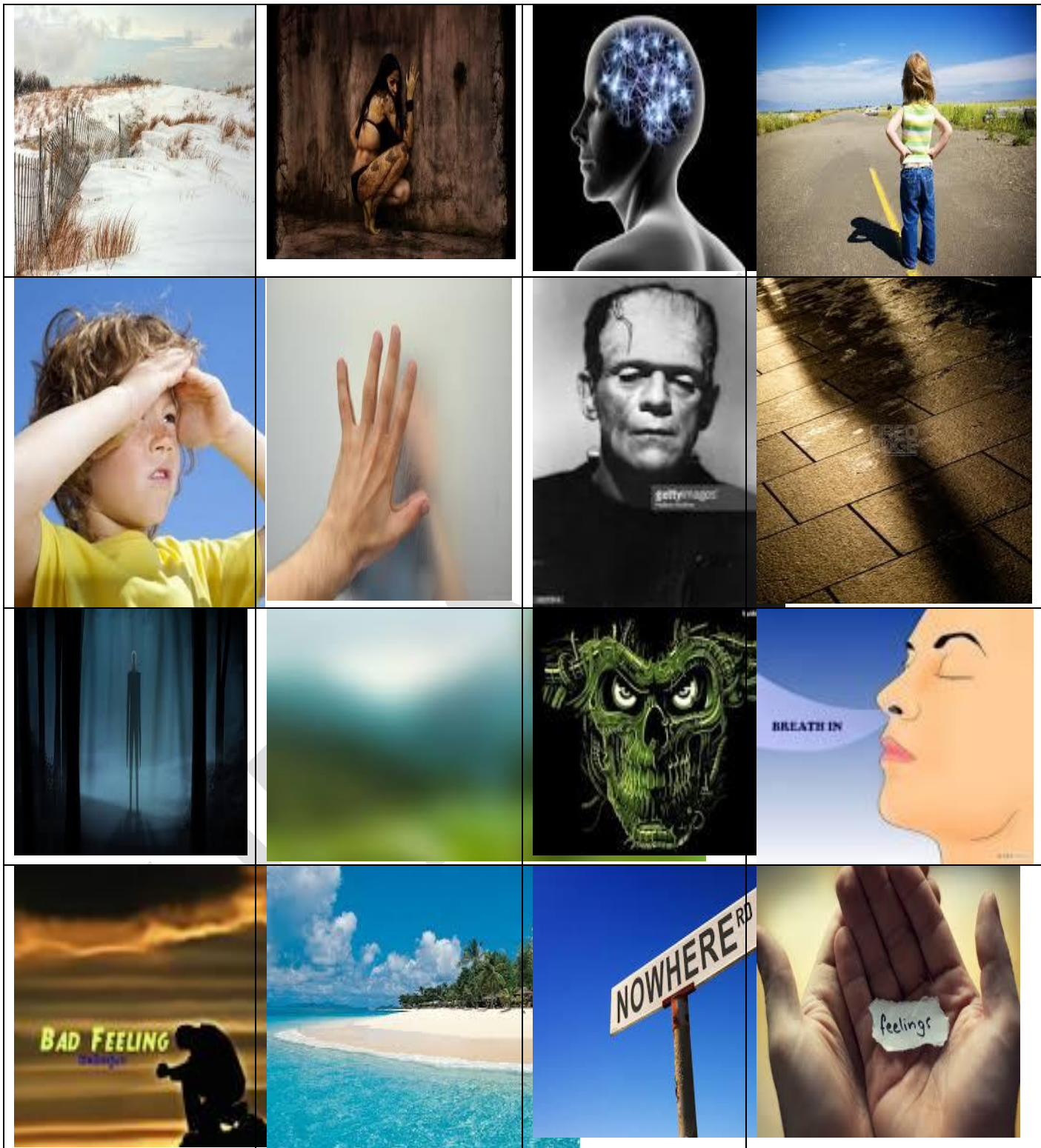
18-

19- Nowhere? No. I think there is a mix up, there is a Misconceived feeling.

20-

Match the Picturesd with some of the words in the poem.





Match the Picturesd with some of the words in the poem.

2- Find Symbols appropriate for the words given below.

(Sound)= Thunder

(Island)

(Phobia)

(The unseen)

(Monster)

(Nowhere)

(Path)

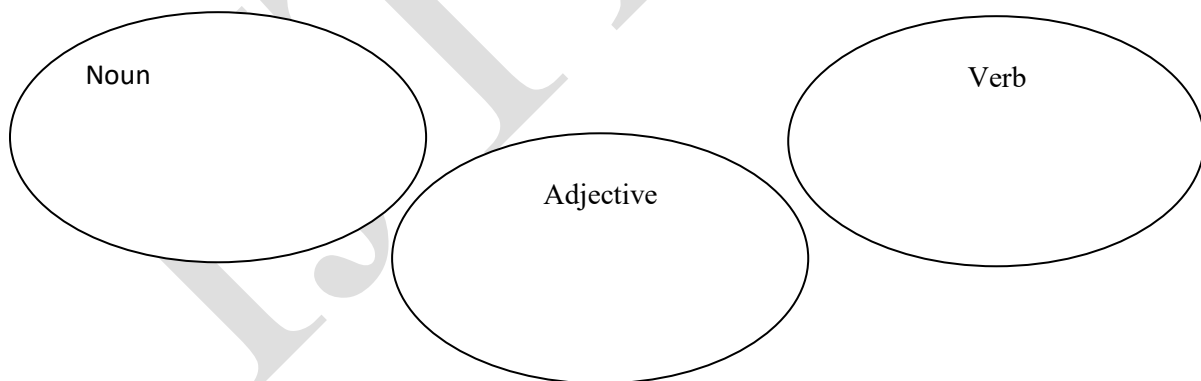
(Snow)

(Gloom)

(Fluidity)

3- Divide the following words into three groups, and give your reasons for your grouping

Feelings, Island, nostalgia, silence, gloomy, future, terrifying, monster, forward, picture, mind, clumsiness, presence, literal, voice, still, walking.

***Discuss the relationship between the following lexical items taken from the poem***

Nostalgia/self-encouragement

Phobia/Monster

Silence/feelings

Island/Snow

Put these following inverted sentences taken from the poem into standard word order

“of Patmos I see the unseen on the Island”

“My self-encouragement Nostalgia pines down the strength of ”

“And never cease to breathe On this Island I live”

The following words have more than one meaning. Find them in the poem and circle the correct meaning.

Path: (1) A narrow way, meant to be walked through
(2) The way that someone takes to achieve something

Silence: (1) A complete absence of sound
(2) A refusal to talk about something or provide information

Presence: (1) The state of being available
(2) An impressive appearance or an impressive way of behaving or speaking

Hurt: (1) The state of pain experience
(2) To cause damage or problem or to harm someone's chance to succeed at something.

Complete the following sentences

"On the Island of Patmos, there is hope even when hope is lost"

On Island of Patmos, there is help even when help.....

On the Island of Patmos there is a way even when way.....

On the Island of Patmos there is life even when.....

On the Island of Patmos, there is safety even when.....

Fill in the gaps with suitable prepositions if necessary

1. There is a cup.....the picture
2. A dog isthe snowing sand
3. He stretches his handthe man of phobia
4. I am goingPatmos tomorrow
5. I will be going backthe Island soon
6. She putsa beautiful traditional attire before moving forward
7. He likes.....feel his presence
8. While walking together, he lays his hand.....her shoulder while they seek what is lost
9. I am so proud.....have you as my brother despite your loneliness
10. She wassee her brother before seeing the future she never hoped to see

Fill in the gaps as you like

1. The clumsiness of the was removed.
2. Walking through the of the gloomy Island
3. To behold the unseen,was that I saw nothing.
4. Thought is restricted,I looked forward, gazed a little.
5. But I feel this terrifying Then came a literal still voice
6. On the Island, there is hope when hope is lost.
7. But this fear I must stop, I should disregard.
8. Subjugated in fear, the thunderous voice of silence

Act out the following

1. Pause
2. Draw a picture
3. Show me a face with fear
4. Step forward
5. Look into the future
6. Touch my shoulder from the back
7. Lower your eyes
8. Look forward
9. Give a terrifying face

10. Feel lonely
11. Breathe in
12. Gaze forward

CONCLUSION

Without any further glamorized whims about using literature to teach language, the activities above have been able to practically accentuate the indispensability of this subject and how useful it will be if teachers can adopt and adhere to this form of teaching in the classroom. The study is able to review and explore the efficacy of this subject matter and its applicability into the system of which makes it feasible, profitable and absorbing for academic development. Not basing this phenomenon on hocus-pocus tendency, literature as a matter of fact is a good medium that can be used for the intellectual build-up of the students. In this sense, when students are wary of this, they get themselves familiar with it and it becomes helpful for further studies.

The ingenuity of learners could be examined and apotheosized through literary studies. The ability of the students to think critically and comprehensively is a good factor that gives an exceptional perspicacity to learning language through literature. In this view, this method serves as an infotainment to the learners and enhances their exposure in learning. Learning therefore is not only learning for learning purpose but also to entertain because the work of literature gives exciting scenarios that eliminate boring and monotonous atmosphere. The interactive method also eliminates timidity in some learners who find it difficult to verbally express themselves; this therefore creates student-teacher relationship, as every student will be made to be directly involved. Therefore, this study has examined the impact that the literary text has while using it to teach language in a classroom. The results prove that if every teacher can take this into consideration, it will boost the morale of the students for adequate assimilation of any given subjects.

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